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IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT  
IN AND FOR HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY, STATE OF FLORIDA

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IN THE MATTER OF: :  
:  
EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 00-256; :  
INQUIRY RELATED TO THE CONDUCT :  
OF THE HONORABLE ROBERT BONANNO, :  
A CIRCUIT JUDGE :  
- - - - - X

GRAND JURY TESTIMONY OF DENISE SHEFFIELD ROSE  
and SCOTT F. PETERKA

DATE: December 5, 2000  
TIME: Beginning at 9:00 a.m.  
Concluding at 9:45 a.m.  
PLACE: Grand Jury Room - Third Floor  
Hillsborough County Courthouse  
419 Pierce Street  
Tampa, Florida 33602  
COURT REPORTER: LYNDA J. MILLS  
Registered Merit Reporter  
Notary Public  
State of Florida at Large

1 APPEARANCES:

2 On behalf of State:

3 HON. JERRY HILL, STATE ATTORNEY  
 4 HON. ALFRED C. THULLBERY, JR.  
 5 Office of the State Attorney  
 6 Tenth Judicial Circuit  
 7 255 North Broadway  
 8 Bartow, Florida 33831-9000  
 9 (863) 534-4800  
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17 I N D E X

18 WITNESSES: EXAMINATION BY AT PAGE

19 For the State:

20	DENISE S. ROSE	Mr. Hill	3
		Grand Jurors	8
21		Mr. Hill	9
		Grand Jurors	11
22	SCOTT F. PETERKA	Mr. Hill	13
23		Grand Jurors	17
24	Certificate of Reporter		20
25			

## P R O C E E D I N G S

Whereupon,

DENISE SHEFFIELD ROSE,

was called as a witness, and being duly sworn by Alfred C. Thullbery, Jr., Assistant State Attorney, was examined and testified as follows:

## DIRECT EXAMINATION

BY MR. HILL:

Q Good morning.

A Good morning.

Q Would you state your full name for the Grand Jury?

A I'm Denise Sheffield Rose.

Q And you are employed by whom?

A The Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Q How long have you been with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement?

A Eleven-and-a-half years.

Q In what capacity do you now serve?

A I am a Special Agent.

Q What does that mean?

A I'm an investigator.

Q Okay, great. At my request did you join in a meeting with Joanie Helms in the recent past?

1 A Yes.

2 Q Can you tell the Grand Jury how that came  
3 about?

4 A I was asked on last Tuesday, November  
5 28th, the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, I was asked to  
6 meet Mr. Hill at just really right across the way there  
7 at the State Attorney's Office to possibly serve a  
8 subpoena to Joan Helms. So I showed up at 9:00 with a  
9 subpoena.

10 Q And who all was involved in the meeting  
11 that followed?

12 A There was Jerry Hill, myself, and Joan  
13 Helms.

14 Q And that occurred on Tuesday, November  
15 28, 2000?

16 A Yes.

17 Q And that actually occurred in the  
18 conference room in the State Attorney's Office; is that  
19 correct?

20 A That's correct.

21 Q All right. I want to go over very  
22 briefly the points that we touched on with her. She  
23 went into some detail regarding the relationship that  
24 she had had with Judge Bonanno; is that correct?

25 A That's correct.

1 Q Do you recall the date she gave you as to  
2 roughly when it began and when it ended?

3 A She said that she met Judge Bonanno in  
4 this courthouse. And she didn't say when she met him,  
5 but she said the sexual or relationship occurred in '95  
6 and it ended at the beginning of this year, 2000.

7 Q So that's a relationship that spanned the  
8 better part of five years?

9 A Yes, five years.

10 Q Did she indicate to you what kind of  
11 activities occurred in this courthouse or across the  
12 street between the two of them?

13 A She said that they didn't really make  
14 plans from 9:00 to 5:00, but she said that she  
15 regularly spent breaks in his chambers or lunch in his  
16 chambers.

17 She said she was having personal problems  
18 at the time at -- at her employment at the Clerk's  
19 office, and that she would discuss these matters with  
20 the judge, I guess, on her breaks or at lunch.

21 Q Would she always announce ahead of time  
22 that she was going to visit with the judge?

23 A I'm not sure of your question.

24 Q Well, I mean, would she always call the  
25 judge and say, "I'm coming. Will you be there?" or how

1 would that come about?

2 A Yes, it seemed that way because she said  
3 that she would never call him directly, but she would  
4 call his judicial assistant, Charlotte McLaurin, who  
5 has been his judicial assistant for 12 years. So she  
6 always said the calls went through her.

7 Q Did she indicate that he was almost  
8 always available to meet with her at any time?

9 A Yes, it seemed like that was -- that he  
10 was very accessible to her.

11 Q They had a working relationship for a  
12 year, or sixteen months, or whatever it was?

13 A Yes. After we finished the interview, I  
14 spoke with the Circuit Clerk Ake and he -- or Ake, he  
15 pulled a report for me. It's an Order from the  
16 Hillsborough County -- I've got it exactly what it is.  
17 It's Administrative Order SO3-97-142. And that just  
18 established the Trial Division within the Civil  
19 Division where you would have a court, judge, and a  
20 jury for civil trials.

21 And Judge Bonanno -- that was in '98,  
22 January 5th of '98 that that began. And Judge Bonanno  
23 was the very first judge assigned to this new division,  
24 and Clerk Joan Helms was assigned to him. So they were  
25 permanently assigned for a year beginning '98.

1 Q And how did she describe that year, as  
2 you recall it?

3 A Let me just quote, because I did write a  
4 report and that way -- we asked, you know, "You worked  
5 closely?" And she said -- she stated, "That was nice.  
6 It gave us time to talk and to be together."

7 Q She did describe at least one instance  
8 that related to state business where she accompanied  
9 him?

10 A Yes. She talked to us about in 1999 she  
11 went to Fort Lauderdale to a judicial conference with  
12 him.

13 Q That got kind of interesting because she  
14 alluded to a friend; do you recall that?

15 A Yeah. She said, "Oh, I have a friend in  
16 Fort Lauderdale." And he asked, "Well, what's the  
17 friend's name?" You could tell she didn't really want  
18 to get her friend involved and so she kind of backed  
19 up. But, yeah --

20 Q It started out as an indication like,  
21 "Gosh, I stayed with my friend," type thing?

22 A But then you asked specifically, "Did you  
23 stay with the judge?" And she said, "Yes."

24 Q And that was at a, either a circuit or a  
25 state sponsored conference; is that right?

1           A           That's correct. Seemed like it was a  
2 judge conference, a judicial conference.

3           Q           All right. Do you recall her saying when  
4 and why that relationship ended?

5           A           She said that, best of my recollection  
6 she said, "I knew that if I was around him I would want  
7 him, and so I just decided to not be around him."

8           Q           She was very protective, almost offended  
9 that we were asking these types of questions?

10          A           Yes, certainly at the beginning. It got  
11 a little easier at the end. But, oh, yes, she was  
12 quite defensive at the beginning and didn't understand  
13 the relevance of this personal relationship to anything  
14 that we may be involved in.

15                   MR. HILL: I'm going to see if the Grand  
16 Jury has any questions of you, okay?

17                   THE WITNESS: Okay.

18                               EXAMINATION

19 BY GRAND JUROR:

20          Q           Is Ms. Helms married?

21          A           She is not.

22          Q           Okay. What about the judge?

23          A           He is married. Same wife, from what we  
24 understand, during that affair to present day.

25                               FURTHER EXAMINATION



1 BY MR. HILL:

2 Q Did Joanie believe that there was -- I  
3 mean, had they discussed marriage? Could you glean  
4 that from this conversation?

5 A You got the impression that there was no  
6 way that the two of them were going to be together.  
7 That's why she made the decision she did earlier in the  
8 year.

9 Q But prior to that for that period of five  
10 years, did she see a future with the judge?

11 A I think she did. I mean, I think she  
12 cares for him. That was -- I mean, she did not say  
13 anything like that, but that was certainly the feeling  
14 I got because she was protective of the relationship  
15 and her -- she still said that they were friends; that  
16 it ended and they are friends.

17 Q She continues to maintain a picture of  
18 the judge in her office?

19 A Well, she said that she did have a  
20 picture in her office, but my understanding was that  
21 she said now it's been replaced with a picture of her  
22 son. But it was just freely on her desk.

23 Q I want to publicly thank you for all  
24 you've done --

25 A Thanks.

1           Q       -- for the Grand Jury. Maybe they didn't  
2 know it, but they do now. And certainly for all you've  
3 done for Chip and I during this investigation.

4           A       It's a tough one. My heart goes out to  
5 you guys. It's certainly a first, really difficult  
6 task.

7           Q       Before we excuse you, can you think of  
8 anything I haven't asked you that we need to share with  
9 the Grand Jury, that you need to share?

10          A       One thing that she did say, during that  
11 year that they were together, she said a year and four  
12 months, she made that pretty clear, and then the record  
13 shows that it was a year. So I don't know what to do  
14 about that. But also we asked how often were the  
15 lunches. And she said pretty often.

16                   And he said one day, two days? And it  
17 got to where it was four days. So it was either  
18 everybody, the judicial assistant, the bailiff, the  
19 judge, and Clerk Helms would eat in, or they would go  
20 out, or it would just be the two of them in the  
21 chambers. But it was a regular occurrence.

22          Q       Did you glean that while she denied it,  
23 there was nonetheless ample opportunity for the two of  
24 them to get together in an intimate situation in the  
25 courthouse?